

Backcountry Location Names and GPS coordinates

Project Proposal

Bruce Tremper
Utah Avalanche Center

Much confusion has resulted when a backcountry recreationist calls 911 to report an accident and uses a local place name or even a name on an existing map. These names with the associated GPS coordinates do not exist in a database accessible to 911 operators. This is a problem even at the Utah Avalanche Center where our forecasters who routinely process hundreds of observations from various obscure locations, have a difficult time keeping up with all the various names. It is also a problem with the general public to keep track of backcountry place names. As the backcountry becomes more crowded, the problem with continue to grow.

We propose a project of mutual interest to VECC, SAR groups, the Utah Avalanche Center and to the general public. Specifically, we would like to create a comprehensive database of place names, each associated with a GPS coordinate.

We already have a start on this project. This season, every time we posted an observations, an avalanche, a snow profile or an accident, we choose a place name and put a marker on a Google Map to give a GPS location, which automatically created an entry in our database. However, we realize this only scratches the surface because many place names are not in the database and there are many other names commonly used for the same places by different user groups.

I have discussed this project with Joe Borgione, who can merge the information into a VECC database. You can view his proof-of-concept database display: <http://166.70.83.207/canyons/>

Funding Requested:

We are seeking funding for a summer project to complete the database. The cost bid is \$3000.

Work Required:

Error-check existing data, enter new data and to gather other place names and duplicate place names from user groups, including the Wasatch Powderbird Guides, Utah Department of Transportation, snowboarders, skiers, snowmobilers, guides and climbers. This project would include just the Wasatch Range. Work would be completed by the end of the summer 2010.

Deliverables include:

A database with place names, duplicate place names and a single, associated GPS coordinate--not a polygon. This would include Salt Lake County only. Future projects could be expanded to other counties. Perhaps there should also be funding each year to maintain and update the database.

Time permitting, we can publish a searchable database on our own web site along with oblique photos with common place names entered.

Contact Information:

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Contract Information:

Payment can be made to one of two entities:

Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center
(a non-profit group)

Paul Diegel - Acting Executive Director
Friends of the Utah Avalanche Center
2084 East 3900 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84124
801-450-5729
friends@utahavalanchecenter.org
Tax ID - 87-1481453

or

Directly to the Forest Service

Salt Lake County has an existing agreement in place to fund the Utah Avalanche Center under the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest for \$22,500 per year. This agreement can be updated with an additional financial plan and the Forest Service can submit a billing.

or

There is an agreement between Salt Lake County and the law enforcement division of the Forest Service. If funding is available in that agreement, we can work on their job code.